

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

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Speakers: Lawrence Chapman, Product Marketing Alliance (interviewer)
Jing Gu, Product Marketing Manager – Platform Solutions, Shutterstock

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Lawrence Chapman (00:02):

Hi everyone. And thank you for tuning into the latest episode of the Product Marketing Insider podcast. My name is Lawrence Chapman and I'm a content marketer at PMA [Product Marketing Alliance]. Today's podcast is sponsored by Kompyte, a leading competitive intelligence automation platform designed to simplify the process of competitive tracking across the broadest spectrum of digital channels. Kompyte presents strategic insights designed to help customers rise above the noise in competitive markets and provide sources to improve messaging, positioning, revenue capture, and product development.

Lawrence Chapman (00:32):

Head to kompyte.com for more information, and to get your free trial. Here on the Product Marketing Insider podcast, we're on a mission to speak to 50 plus PMMs [Product Marketing Managers], to learn more about their journey into product marketing, their respective roles, who they communicate with most and a whole lot more. And today I'm thrilled to be joined by Jing Gu, Product Marketing Manager at Platform Solutions in Shutterstock, one of the leading providers of stock photography, stock footage, stock music and editing tools.

Lawrence Chapman (01:01):

A product marketer based in New York city, Jing also has experience working as a marketing strategist as well as a private consultant, and we'll be discussing her career journey during the podcast. But for now, a huge welcome, Jing. Thanks so much for joining me.

Jing Gu (01:16):

Thanks. Good to be here.

Lawrence Chapman (01:18):

Oh, no, thanks very much. It's our pleasure. So first and foremost, it'd just be great to learn more about your current role at Shutterstock if you don't mind.

Jing Gu (01:25):

Yeah. So Product Marketing Manager for a business unit called Platform Solutions, and what that really means is Shutterstock has all of our content, right? The images, the videos, the music, um, but we also have a set of integration products and that product portfolio includes the Shutterstock API, the editor SDK [software development kit], SSO, um, and also all of our plugins.

Jing Gu (01:52):

So essentially we allow our partners to recreate the Shutterstock experience within their platform. For instance, like Microsoft has an ad manager, right? So we, our API serves up images for advertisers to search, preview, license, download, and push across their ads with minimal friction within the Microsoft platform. So that is kind of the business unit that I work on, um, and our products.

Lawrence Chapman (02:20):

Okay. Sounds -- sounds awesome really. So what is it that made you want to become a product manager in the first place?

Jing Gu (02:28):

That's a good question. I wanted to become a product marketer because I was already doing the work of a product marketer and didn't have a name for it. So essentially when I started with Shutterstock, my job was to build out the content on inbound pipeline for these products, um, with the business unit Platform Solutions. Um, but in the process of building out content from top of funnel thought leadership, case studies, all the way down to sales enablement, what I was really doing is refining the messaging and positioning for this suite of integration products.

Jing Gu (03:04):

And at the time I thought I was doing more than content, but what is the name for it? So I looked around, found product marketing and then realized that that actually is very intriguing to me because product marketing sits a little bit closer to revenue than, you know, content marketing, which more, is more top of funnel, demand gen work. And I get to plug into all of our data sources and really activate that data in a sort of narrative

for every single team, for them to be more effective at their jobs. So it was really exciting to have found product marketing and, uh, I made a pivot into product marketing.

Lawrence Chapman (03:44):

Oh, amazing. And so how did you get into like product -- Oh, product marketing and what did, what did your first job look like in product marketing? Rather.

Jing Gu (03:55):

Oh, okay. Well, (laughs) so my first job in product marketing is my current job at Shutterstock. Um, how did I get into product marketing is a good question because it's a complete accident. I didn't even know about it as a field when I started as, um, a marketing consultant or even prior to that as a project manager with a s- uh, healthcare startup in LA. Um, let me know if you want me to dive into more details about that whole trajectory. (laughs)

Lawrence Chapman (04:27):

Oh, no, absolutely. Yeah, that'd be great. Yeah. I'd love to hear that.

Jing Gu (04:30):

(laughs) So originally I was tracked for academia. I was supposed to get my master's and my PhD and become a professor. And when I graduated undergrad, I worked at the healthcare startup in Los Angeles as their second hire, essentially. And I did marketing, sales, uh, data analysis, everything under the umbrella. Um, what really resonated was a marketing piece that I thought I could really make a career out of this if I didn't want to do academia.

Jing Gu (05:02):

When I came to New York, I was doing my graduate degree in performance studies, which is just the aesthetic philosophy, if we want a simpler term for it. Um, I thought to myself, if I cannot market myself, I don't really deserve to be a marketer. So I validated, uh, whether or not marketing was a career for me by essentially starting up my own freelance agency that grew to be much bigger than I imagined it.

Jing Gu (05:26):

Like at some point I had, um, creatives working for me, I had, uh, assistants. So it was kind of a miniature agency. And I got Shutterstock as a client, uh, Shutterstock took all, took over all of my time. I was doing content and inbound marketing. Um, and then as what I said before, you know, I realized that what I was really doing is product marketing and I wanted to bring more value to Shutterstock.

Jing Gu (05:54):

It was a really exciting product, a really great team. So I pitched the product marketing function to, to my managers, to senior stakeholders. They liked the idea and we made the pivot and that has been my job ever since.

Lawrence Chapman (06:10):

Oh, good. Well, that must have been such a, a huge confidence boost, just so you know, so the way that, you know, early on to gain a client such as Shutterstock and then, you know, getting, you know, go and, you know, see that progression to obviously, you know, where you are now. That must be amazing.

Jing Gu (06:27):

Yeah. Shutterstock was a, it was a huge validation that I was on the right track with marketing. And, you know, also in terms of a pivot to product marketing, I have a really supportive team, supportive senior stakeholders who are pretty invested in the growth of their team members. So when I told them that product marketing was the thing that's going to add value for them and that I was more interested in, um, it was a pretty smooth conversation.

Jing Gu (06:56):

So I, uh, in some ways I did luck out with Shutterstock, but that is also, that's not to, you know, diminish any of the work I did as a freelance consultant. Um, but you know, you, you kind of... What's the phrase I'm looking for, um, opportunity favors the prepared, and at that point I was prepared to take on the role, so.

Lawrence Chapman (07:22):

Oh, amazing. Well, everything happens for a reason. That's what I say. (laughs) So you're a product marketer with, you know, ample experience in go-to-market strategy. And as we know the implementation of a go-to-market strategy at one company, it may vary to that of another. So what does the process look like at Shutterstock?

Jing Gu (07:40):

The process at Shutterstock also looks different from one launch to another. Um, we have three distinct business units with product marketing support, each of the -- supporting each of them. Um, for Platform Solutions, I created the go-to-market strategy for this business unit. And it's gone through a few iterations. We're at a point where I'm pretty happy with it at the moment. It starts with opportunity validation.

Jing Gu (08:07):

So you tell me we're going to launch a product, uh, okay, why are we doing it? Who cares about it? And what are our competitors doing? So the opportunity validation, I look at segmentation. So how much of the market are we targeting or how many customers really cares about this. Uh, competitive analysis on feature pricing, packaging, and delivery.

Um, then once the validation is done and we've projected some numbers, I show these numbers to my stakeholders to get buy-in.

Jing Gu (08:37):

So when we launch, these are the goals. Does that sound right to you? Are there anything else -- Is there anything else we should consider and account for? Once we have buy-in, um, then it's roll up your sleeves and really define the messaging and positioning. So the messaging and positioning, um, I like to provide ample stats and testimonials to back up each value proposition. I also like to segment it by persona and buyer stage.

Jing Gu (09:05):

This is for sales to be able to have a conversation confidently and on, on brand and on message. And also, you know, if we're working with the creative team, they need to know what the different buyer stages and how to message to each of them to move folks down the funnel. Once the messaging and positioning is done, that's kind of the foundation. So at that point, I start working on the channel mix and budget.

Jing Gu (09:30):

Um, so if it's a self-serve product, that's going to be, that's going to go to market differently from an enterprise product, which is going to have a lot more sales involvement, outreach efforts. And then once your channel mix and budget has been defined, working backwards into the collateral that's needed to support each channel. Then you create everything and then you launch it. Uh, launch day for me is usually the -- It's not that stressful because you've already done all your prep work, so you just have to trust your sea legs.

Jing Gu (10:01):

You know, you're ready to go, your team is ready to go, just launch the thing. Um, and I don't see launches as a discrete moment in time necessarily. I really believe in ongoing optimization. There are things you can do post-launch to, uh, restoke the fire, so to speak, and keep people talking about the product and really capture that long tail of a launch. Um, you know, you put in all this work, you might as well see some business results, right? So that's where the optimization and fast follows come in.

Jing Gu (10:33):

Um, and each launch kind of builds on another, um, you know, in terms of collateral, in terms of channels and just everything else. So, but that is a generic process, validation, goals, messaging, positioning, channel mix, cre -- uh, creative process, and then launch and optimization.

Lawrence Chapman (10:54):

Okay, awesome. And in addition to, you know, your, um, you know, go-to-market strategy here on and your, and your involvement with that, um, I mean, there's no doubt surrounding the importance of collaboration as well. It was actually once considered, um, you know, when we su -- when we surveyed, uh, PMMs in the state of product marketing report, it was considered the most important skill by the sample. And how do you collaborate internally at Shutterstock to support, um, products prioritization and to generate sales insights?

Jing Gu (11:31):

First of all, excellent report. Uh, I read all of PMA's reports, whether that's, uh, say to product marketing or sales enablement, all of them are amazing, chock-full of data, I love them, collaboration is absolutely the most important skill, nothing gets done. And I don't mean that in a, a negative way, but all, any success I've been able to have as a product marketer is because I have a great team supporting me, um, and that I support in return.

Jing Gu (12:00):

So in terms of product prioritization, I try to give Product as much data and information as they need to understand the marketplace and the ways in which it's evolving. So they have very packed roadmap, they have different things they want to prioritize. So in terms of the input that I provide product, um, I will share results and analysis from customer satisfaction surveys. So which vertical has which problem, which, uh, persona, uh, has what types of comments, because usually you see themes starting to form around those two, um, those two focus areas.

Jing Gu (12:39):

Beyond customer satisfaction, I also, uh, conduct competitive analysis, which is shared across the team. It's both on a features level, it's on pricing, um, it's also on discoverability. So which API directories are our competitors listed in? Should we consider that directory for ourselves? Uh, I also share visitor level analytics. So traffic from different regions, uh, what people are clicking on when they click on an email, uh, as well as persona based challenges.

Jing Gu (13:11):

Uh, we, uh, conduct, or not conduct, I join their user testing sessions and we talk about pricing and packaging together. Um, so all of that information I provide to product with some sort of feedback. It's not just here's the info run with it, I'll say, okay, like, it really seems like people are having trouble with the updates endpoint in the API, for instance.

Jing Gu (13:34):

Um, that problem has been seen in the customer satisfaction survey in these verticals with these personas and it's impacting their experience with the product. So what can we do to

push this forward? And in saying that, product [inaudible 00:13:48] oh, like this is actually a problem, they received the validation they need to prioritize features differently. And the up -- updates endpoint was, um, uh, launched, not launched, but, uh, updated, uh, I think in July or August of this year, following our satisfaction surveys.

Jing Gu (14:07):

In terms of sales, they receive a very similar set of inputs in terms of data. Um, but I also with sales, I will review pipeline. So close won, close lost, why? Uh, I will also provide them case studies and cohort analysis just to say, okay, when you're talking to a prospect in this vertical, here's a company that's similar to them that has seen great success. Or in terms of a cohort analysis, you know, partners in this vertical, see an X percentage growth year over year. Wouldn't you want this to be your company?

Jing Gu (14:41):

Um, and the other really special thing with sales is I find sales to be incredibly dynamic. You know, they're on the front lines, they're adjusting their pitches, essentially on the slide to fit the person that they're talking to. I don't necessarily get that rapid feedback loop on the market. So I also try really hard to stay on pace with sales. I'm not mad if they don't stick to messaging or positioning 100% because they need to do what they need to do to get the prospect to be interested to say yes.

Jing Gu (15:15):

So when they start presenting a, a product or feature differently, I want to understand why. And then it's happened in the past where for one vertical, we started talking about, um, backend versus front-end, it's, uh, kind of, uh, on a very technical basis, but sales started talking about it in terms of that customer oriented distinction. And that was incorporated across all of our collaterals because it was much clearer, it's much cleaner, and it's customer-focused.

Jing Gu (15:47):

So with sales it's, I give them everything, I provide the collaterals, even like custom mock-ups, um, onboarding modules and training, but I also really value that feedback loop from them, just in terms of like, what are you hearing in the market? There is a trend. If something has happened two or three times, let me know. So that is a general, uh, collaboration between product and sales. Uh, we have formal meetings, but sometimes we also are very active on Slack, so lots of GIFs are exchanged.

Lawrence Chapman (16:21):

Oh, okay. And then in terms of teams outside of marketing, like, um, you know, products, operations, sales, like you say, um, which departments do you have the most interaction with and what's your relationship like with them?

Jing Gu (16:37):

Yeah, so I interact -- So Platform Solutions is unique in that we're a startup within Shutterstock. We have our own marketing, sales, operations, uh, partner management, which is customer success. Um, that just means that I collaborate a lot with the broader marketing org at the Shutterstock, um, mothership (laughs) so to speak. Uh, but outside of marketing, I work really closely with our API engineers, uh, (laughs) because they, they build a lot of the awesome features that we have. Um, sometimes I have really stupid questions, but they're very patient with me, which I appreciate, and I think we have a really good working relationship.

Jing Gu (17:24):

I will sit in on their demos to understand how they work with APIs, the product life cycle. Um, in the past, we've also brainstormed names together because developers are a primary audience for integration products. So sometimes I use them as a small beta group, just to say, how does this name sound to you? What do you think when I say term X, Y, or Z, gather that feedback and we've done brainstorming sessions in the past and came up with product names that were actually launched.

Jing Gu (17:53):

So Shutterstock UI, for instance, which is a developer tool, that was all of the engineers, uh, brain juices flowing together. So we have a good working relationship.

Lawrence Chapman (18:05):

So that's interesting there. So it's almost like pooling your resources and, you know, coming together to, you know, to form one thing, or something like almost in many ways, taking a brief to the team and just gain their insights and then coming out with something tangible at the end of it.

Jing Gu (18:22):

Absolutely. You have -- A lot of times in B2B marketing, you have a lot of the stakeholders that you would potentially target already within your internal teams. So if you just want quick feedback on something, there's no reason not to ping someone and just say, "Hey, really want to get your eyes on this. You fit the persona. If someone were to pitch you this, what would you think?" So, yes, I do that, not just with the engineers, but with other folks in the team as well.

Lawrence Chapman (18:48):

(laughs) And I'm going to throw the question to you next that everyone always kind of like, stands back and says, I'm not too sure about this one. What does a standard day in the life, um, at Shutterstock look like, if there is such thing as a standard day. (laughs)

Jing Gu (19:05):

A standard day, I am still waiting for one. Um, my first response to that question is just yikes, a standard day. Um, it's very different. Uh, let's see. So I'm pretty hands-on with content creation. I, I started my career in content. I'm pretty comfortable with it. So landing pages, blogs, collateral, case studies, um, really good content takes time, so that still takes up, uh, some percentage of my day. I try to stay really close to the data.

Jing Gu (19:38):

So I would say I spend like 10 to 15% of my time on data analysis, whether that's Salesforce, competitor, market research, um, things of that sort. We have a pretty robust co-marketing program, um, that I also oversee so, you know, interfacing with partners, getting their launches live, uh, making sure social, press, content teams are all informed. A lot of my day, well, maybe not a lot, but every day this is consistent, I have to stay on top of all the ongoing launches and projects.

Jing Gu (20:14):

So I use JIRA, there's ticket management, project management, prioritization, that might happen on a day to day basis. Um, and you know, there's, oh, man, there's so, so many other things. If someone needs a custom mock-up for an integration, I will drop things to do that because that means a conversation with a tier one partner or prospect is happening, and I want that to happen as quickly as possible. Or sometimes our team is rapidly growing and I need to update the org chart for instance. So, uh, uh, really a, a mix, but, uh, content, data, co-marketing, project management, prepping for launches, those are the, the cornerstones.

Lawrence Chapman (21:04):

Yeah. Yeah. It seems to be, um, a growing trend, um, with the more, pro -- uh, product marketers I speak to that they all say there is no such thing as a standard day in product marketing, so (laughs) Uh, I'm not going to lie, uh, Jing, I wasn't expecting anything different. (laughs)

Lawrence Chapman (21:18):

Um, so going back to what you were saying, um, about your, you know, your, um, your team, um, all your, you know, your team itself, can you tell us a little bit about your direct team in terms of the number of people within the team and what roles, um, they, you know, they have.

Jing Gu (21:40):

Sure. I think currently, um, as I mentioned before, we are in a hiring phase right now, so it is, uh, bound to change. Also, we're hiring for a global director of marketing, uh, dimension, uh, marketing operations, and a marketing manager in case anyone is interested and want to throw their hat into the ring. Uh, in terms of my direct team, I am

currently the only product marketer on Platform Solutions. I am currently the only marketer on Platform Solutions. So it is a team of one. It hasn't always been this way and it will not be this way for very long.

Jing Gu (22:23):

Uh, but that's, that's where we're operating first. And I think right now I report up to, uh, the senior director of, uh, business development. So I'm very closely aligned with sales, uh, which has been, it, it has been really helpful in terms of just aligning your KPIs and understanding how the work you do has an impact on revenue. But as I said, we are actively hiring for a number of roles, so that will not be the case for very long.

Lawrence Chapman (22:58):

Oh, it sounds exciting though. It's, um, it's always nice to hear about any company growing and getting bigger and especially in the current circumstances with COVID and the, the impact that that's having, um, in product marketing and, you know, and beyond. You know, it's nice to hear, you know, that companies are getting bigger and thriving, so that's fantastic.

Lawrence Chapman (23:19):

Um, so with research and data-driven content also being pivotal to your role, um, there are a variety of research methods that are obviously used by product marketers. Um, what's your favorite approach at Shutterstock? And what steps would you give to PMMs who may be perhaps experiencing kickback from customers, uh, during their search for feedback.

Jing Gu (23:41):

My favorite approach, that nothing beats talking to customers and prospects. It's just, I only have so many hours in a day and that becomes unscalable very quickly. So that is still, uh, my best approach for gathering feedback, but there are also other ways to gather that information. I particularly really like using pay channels as a way to gather feedback. So what we did was in our content syndication campaign, we have a small drop down that just says, what is your biggest challenge?

Jing Gu (24:19):

And we gather that information from, uh, you know, content syndication leads. The great thing about that is you can segment the information by region and by title and by seniority to understand what their top challenge is. And we get, you know, content syndication is a active, ongoing channel for us, so we gather a lot of data fairly quickly without any, without much friction to the, to the user, so to speak.

Jing Gu (24:48):

Um, and it's been really insightful. India has a different set of challenges from, uh, North America, for instance. And we wouldn't have known that had we not, um, had that dropdown in the paid acquisition campaigns. Um, another way to use pay that I really like is running a search ad. So an SEM ad to test messaging, you only have so many characters on Google to make, to drive a click through. So if your messaging is on point for a high intent keyword, your click through rates will be higher versus a messaging that is a little more la -- lackluster. So that's a really great way to just test messaging on the fly.

Jing Gu (25:27):

And if you have a good variation, there's no reason that paid campaign can't generate leads for you. So two birds with one stone. Um, also, you have time obviously hopping on sales calls, looking over Salesforce notes, if Salesforce is your CRM, whatever your CRM is. And because we have, um, an active co-marketing program, sometimes on partner calls, I will just ask questions about different things that their users are facing, different things they're experiencing with the product, what they like, what they don't like. So all of these less, um, less aggressive ways, uh, results in accumulation of a lot of data. (laughs) So.

Lawrence Chapman (26:08):

And in addition to that as well, um, you also define, um, product marketing, so product messaging and positioning as part of your role. So both of which are a crucial part of the overall product marketing strategy. Um, but many people, you know, do get it wrong. What would be your words of wisdom, if you like, for product marketers, to help them execute these areas of greater accuracy?

Jing Gu (26:34):

First of all, it's okay to get these things wrong. I think we're not mind readers. We, if I were a mind reader, I would be an excellent product marketer, but I also wouldn't do product marketing. Um, I think sometimes if you get it wrong, at least you know it's wrong and that can be a data point to get it right the next time. In terms of executing messaging and positioning with greater accuracy, there is nothing that beats data. What I like to do is I like to triangulate the messaging from your features, your customer's needs and the competitive landscape.

Jing Gu (27:08):

You take all of that together and based on your market understanding and putting that into simple words, simple, concise, clear, sharp, good words. I, I don't know how to explain that in greater detail, it just has to pack a punch, but the punch really comes from understanding your customer's needs and how you're meeting them better than your

competitors. And that's why I triangulate between features, needs and competitors. Once you get that messaging, test, just launch it.

Jing Gu (27:40):

Um, what does the first month look like? What is your click through rate looks, look like? Are people converting beyond the click? Are they actually converting to MQL [marketing qualified lead]? So what's the down-funnel impact? Um, if you have the opportunity, A/B tests on landing page, um, again, SEM [search engine marketing] ads are really great proxy metric just for testing, um, for testing messaging, because the ones that convert higher are going to be your more powerful messaging, because somebody searched for something, saw your link or saw your ad and decided that it was compelling enough to click through.

Jing Gu (28:17):

And that compellingness of the messaging, um, is hard to get right. But I think just testing it (laughs) either that's paid or a banner, banner, A/B test, whatever it is helps you get closer to, to the bullseye.

Lawrence Chapman (28:34):

Yeah, sure. It's almost like never, just go with your gut instinct. You know, you've got to always test your assumptions, haven't you? Um, you can kind of, if we wanted a better way of saying it, um, just you can't wing it (laughs) no, you need to go with it and you need to, um, you know, make sure that what you have in your mind is, you know, right, I suppose, um, yeah, the best way to go. And, um, in terms of skillsets, going back to the skillsets, what would you say the top three skills, um, that you have, um, that have helped you get to where you are today?

Jing Gu (29:12):

This is very easy because for me, it absolutely comes down to writing. (laughs)

Lawrence Chapman (29:16):

Mm-hmm.

Jing Gu (29:16):

Writing skills is critical, writing, speaking, language skills. You need to articulate the vision of your product. You need to articulate the value of product marketing. You need to articulate the value of the data that you're giving people. Um, and you need to understand how to frame all of that and make an argument. Um, an argument essentially is kind of your business case for why product marketing exists, for why your product exists.

Jing Gu (29:41):

Um, so that is core, a core skill. Data analysis, don't be afraid of numbers, and don't be afraid of text. There's still ways to make meaning out of text, which is segmentation by verticals, by persona, frequency, uh, sentiment analysis. There are tools online that you can run text through to get a sentiment analysis. So writing, data analysis, and the last one is relationship management.

Jing Gu (30:07):

Uh, you gotta treat your stakeholders like they're your audience too, um, and also trust is earned. So I wouldn't expect to walk into a new job or even at Shutterstock at first, you know, you have to really build up that trust by giving people things that they can put into action right away and see results from, whether that's a deck or that's a, a piece of research, whatever it might be. But those are the three skills I use every day, and it's critical for product marketing in my opinion.

Lawrence Chapman (30:39):

Okay. Sounds great. And in, in a perfect world, where does the role of a PM and a PMM begin and end in your view? And do you think that there should be almost like lines in terms of their responsibilities?

Jing Gu (30:54):

I'm very open to how other people are thinking about this. Um, and this is where the previous episodes of the podcast has been really helpful. My take, uh, is that the lines between product marketing, engineering and sales is getting blurrier by the day, and everyone has a role to play in outcomes around retention, acquisition, monetization. It's not a one person game anymore. So I think the responsibilities are getting blurry.

Jing Gu (31:28):

I, in terms of where the responsibilities begin and end, for me, I think the clearest way to differentiate is on an execution level because execution for product marketing and product management look very different. And that requires a deep level of expertise. A product manager knows how to build a product roadmap, knows how to allocate resources with engineering and to push that through from a, a project through, from a product perspective, whereas product marketing has more expertise around channel, channel mix, even demand gen, um, data analysis.

Jing Gu (32:06):

So execution, I think, is going to stay very specialized, but on a top level, uh, prioritization, uh, messaging, positioning, all of those things for me at least is already collaborative. And I don't really believe in a dichotomy between, you know, product management and product marketing, because if, at the end of the day, if we can work together and have stronger messaging, a stronger go to market plan, I'm all for it. We're

all on the same team. So for me, the line comes down on an execution level and where the expertise lies. Um, again, I'm open to other ways of thinking about this, but that is where I am right now.

Lawrence Chapman (32:49):

Yeah. I suppose in many ways, uh, you can kind of just boil it down to the, um, as you were saying before, about collaboration being just so important, um, and making sure that everyone, you know, wherever possible, making sure they're pulling in the same direction, because if you've got two sets of people or two groups or different amounts of teams and pulling in different directions, it's, it's not going to be conducive to positive results, is it really? So I can totally see where you're coming from. And in a dream world, is there anything that you would change about product marketing?

Jing Gu (33:25):

Product marketing as a role, as a job, I love, I love every piece of it, even -- I just, I love product marketing. Um, my thing about product marketing right now is more of the market conception of it and how people work with product marketing, which as product marketers, you would think we would be really good at positioning and messaging around this, but the general education I think could be, um, could be improved.

Jing Gu (33:54):

And just two things, I think product marketing needs to be involved from the conception of a feature or a development and not an afterthought, because product marketing sits on a lot of data that can inform whether or not this feature should be built, when it should be built, what it should be packaged with, whatever that might be. And if you involve product marketing too late, you kind of, um, tie up the hands of your product marketer and they can't really add as much value as they could.

Jing Gu (34:23):

Um, the second thing I would change in terms of the market conception is product marketing is not a collateral factory, product marketing at its best serves as a strategic partner to sales, to customer success, to product, to SEO, to every other team. So to just relegate it into more of a collateral focus role, I think is you know, getting maybe a percentage of the value that you possibly could get out of your PMMs. And I think businesses would be stronger if they activated all of, uh, product marketers' skillsets around data, around strategic thinking, around messaging and positioning.

Lawrence Chapman (35:08):

Yeah, sure. It's almost like the, um, I don't know, there's almost like this sense of diversity in terms of the different roles within product marketing that bring in so many different people, it's, you know, generating so much appeal with people from all sorts of different backgrounds now coming in as entry level PMMs. Um, and what would your

advice for any new or aspiring product marketers listening to the podcast be, um, in terms of helping them get the most out with their product marketing journey, if you would like, what would your advice to them be, Jing?

Jing Gu (35:47):

Yeah. Yeah. Um, I'm a big fan of doing, just do the damn thing, launch the product, take on that task, volunteer to dig into that data set. Um, failure, I think is inevitable in marketing. You're not going to get home runs every time you launch something, and that's fine. It's a data point. And the more you do, the higher your batting average goes. And then when your batting average is high, you're more likely to have a super impactful product launch that can be really great for your company, really great for your career.

Jing Gu (36:21):

So I would not hesitate to just do the thing, whatever the thing is for you right now, do it. If it scares you a little, that's great. Just do it. When I first started with product marketing, I wasn't sure if I was really cut out for defining messaging and positioning, that really intimidated me, but the more you do it, the more research you gather and the less you think of it as a discrete event that's pass or fail, and more of an ongoing optimization.

Jing Gu (36:51):

The more you realize how important it is to just get out of your own head, push projects forward and launch, because launching is also a really powerful way to validate your idea and to test. Um, the other, uh, advice, um, I think would be to understand a little bit of the basics of demand gen. So demand generation, so that's where you get really into understanding how paid acquisitions work. What is a good cost of acquisition per lead? What is, uh, how does the sales and marketing handoff work? Understanding all of that improves your distribution strategy.

Jing Gu (37:28):

I think you can have the best product in the world, if you don't get it to the right people in the right way, uh, you're going to have less than great business outcomes. So understanding demand gen has really helped me understand the different channels I'm working with, the particularities of those channel and when to activate them for which products. Um, so those are the things. Do it, track the outcomes, um, use the outcomes to build a decent portfolio, iterate and eventually, um, you'll get somewhere and land your first or dream job, or at least that's, that's how I did it. (laughs)

Lawrence Chapman (38:06):

Oh, fantastic. Well, thank you so much for taking the time out to speak to us, Jing. It's been a really interesting insight into the, you know, your, your role at Shutterstock, um, and it, you know, it's been an absolute pleasure, so thank you so much for taking the time out.

Jing Gu (38:21):

Yeah. Thank you.

Unknown Speaker (Announcer) (38:24):

For everyone still tuned in, thanks so much for listening. And if you enjoyed the podcast, please help us spread the word to other product marketers. Before we leave you to go on with your day, if you want to get involved, here's a few ways you can. If you're a product marketer and you want to come on the show and speak about your day, a specific topic or your role in general, that's one option.

Unknown Speaker (Announcer) (38:44):

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